

Message Text

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PAGE 01 JAKART 03272 131008Z
ACTION EA-12

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INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
AMCONSUL MEDAN
AMCONSUL SURABAYA

C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 3272

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, ID
SUBJECT: THE SULTAN DECLINES TO STAND FOR RE-ELECTION

REF: JAKARTA 3196

1. SUMMARY. SULTAN HAMENGKUBUWENO IX HAS ANNOUNCED HIS
DECISION NOT TO ACCEPT RE-ELECTION AS VICE-PRESIDENT. THE
VICE-PRESIDENT, WHILE CITING HEALTH AS ONE REASON FOR HIS
DECISION, SUGGESTED THAT OTHER FACTORS -- ESPECIALLY HIS
INABILITY AS VICE-PRESIDENT TO INFLUENCE GOVERNMENT
POLICY AND HIS DISTRESS OVER RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS
IN INDONESIA -- WERE THE CRUCIAL FACTORS IN HIS DECISION. HE
ALSO HINTED THAT HE MAY CONTINUE TO PLAY A PUBLIC ROLE,
PERHAPS OCCASIONALLY
CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT. PARLIAMENTARY
SPEAKER ADAM MALIK ALMOST CERTAINLY WILL BE ELECTED TO REPLACE THE
SULTAN AS VICE-PRESIDENT. END SUMMARY.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 JAKART 03272 131008Z

2. SULTAN HAMENGKUBUWONO IX, WHO HAS BEEN INDONESIA'S
VICE-PRESIDENT SINCE THE BIRTH OF THE NEW ORDER,
ANNOUNCED ON MARCH 11 HIS DECISION NOT TO ACCEPT RE-
ELECTION. IN BRIEF "LEAVE-TAKING" REMARKS AT A SPECIAL
CABINET SESSION HELD IMMEDIATELY AFTER SUHARTO'S SPEECH
OF ACCOUNTING TO THE NEW MPR, THE SULTAN CITED DECLINING
HEALTH AS ONE REASON FOR HIS DECISION AND SAID HE WAS

ACTING "WITHOUT OUTSIDE INFLUENCE FROM ANYONE AT ALL."

3. THE VICE-PRESIDENT WENT ON TO LIST "OTHER CONSIDERATIONS" IN HIS DECISION, HOWEVER, SUGGESTING THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE BEEN DECISIVE. HE REVEALED INCREASING RESTLESSNESS AT THE LIMITATIONS OF THE VICE-PRESIDENTIAL OFFICE, RELATING THAT "IN THOROUGHLY PONDERING" THE MATTER, HE REALIZED "A GROWING DESIRE IN MY SPIRIT TO MAKE A GREATER AND MORE EFFECTIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE STATE AND THE PEOPLE. THIS I WILL BE ABLE TO DO IF I FREE MYSELF FROM THE OFFICIAL OBSTACLES THAT RESIDE IN THE POSITION OF THE VICE-PRESIDENT." RATHER POINTEDLY, HE NOTED THAT DESPITE AN "OPEN WORKING RELATIONSHIP" WITH SUHARTO, HIS CONTRIBUTIONS AS VICE-PRESIDENT "OFTEN WERE INDIRECT." HE ALSO SAID THAT HIS HEALTH WAS STILL GOOD ENOUGH THAT HE FELT "ABLE, AND BECAUSE OF THAT, READY TO AID IN CONTINUED NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT."

4. HE ALSO IMPLIED CONCERN AT THE EVOLUTION OF THE GOVERNMENT'S TWO-MONTH-OLD CRACKDOWN ON DISSIDENTS, SAYING THAT HE "IS CONTINUALLY LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF THE PEOPLE, WHICH HAVE PENETRATED MY HEART, ASKING FOR MORE SATISFYING SOCIAL JUSTICE AND A MORE EFFECTIVE GUARANTEE OF A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS LIFE, WITHOUT PHYSICAL OR MENTAL PRESSURES." DESPITE THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED "BY THE DEVELOPMENT CABINET," SAID THE SULTAN, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 JAKART 03272 131008Z

"WE MUST CONTINUE AND INTENSIFY THE STRUGGLE TO CREATE THE KIND OF SOCIETY WE DESIRE."

5. REACTION TO THE SULTAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT HAS BEEN MUTED AND PREDICTABLE. GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN, LED BY STATE SECRETARY SUDHARMO AND GOLKAR LEADER AMIR MURTONO, ATTRIBUTED THE VICE-PRESIDENT'S DECISION ENTIRELY TO CONSIDERATIONS OF PERSONAL HEALTH AND SAID PLANS WERE PROCEEDING SMOOTHLY TO FIND A REPLACEMENT. ONE LEADER OF THE MOSLEM-BASED UNITY DEVELOPMENT PARTY (PPP) IMPLIED THAT THE SULTAN'S WITHDRAWAL WOULD HAVE IMPORTANT POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES BUT INDICATED PPP WAS NOT PREPARED YET TO OFFER AN ALTERNATIVE CANDIDATE. ANOTHER LESS AUTHORITATIVE PPP-ER SUGGESTED THAT HIS PARTY MIGHT NOMINATE FORMER PARLIAMENTARY CHAIRMAN IDHAM CHALID FOR VICE-PRESIDENT.

6. COMMENT. WHILE SUHARTO WILL SUFFER NO IMMEDIATE, VISIBLE DAMAGE FROM THE SULTAN'S DECISION -- IT WILL HAVE NO IMPACT ON SUHARTO'S RE-ELECTION ON MARCH 22, FOR EXAMPLE -- IT IS A SYMBOLIC BLOW TO THE PRESIDENT. DESPITE EFFORTS OF GOVERNMENT LEADERS

TO PORTRAY THE SULTAN'S MOVE AS NON-POLITICAL, IT WILL BE UNIVERSALLY -- AND CORRECTLY -- INTERPRETED AS THE SULTAN'S JUMPING SHIP BECAUSE OF SERIOUS DISSATISFACTION WITH THE SUHARTO REGIME. AS SUCH, IT REPRESENTS ANOTHER IN A GROWING LIST OF SIGNS THAT THE PRESIDENT'S SUPPORT IS GRADUALLY NARROWING. IT WILL ACCELERATE BY ANOTHER NOTCH THE PROCESS WHICH WE THINK HAS ALREADY BEGUN IN THE MILITARY, NOT YET TO DUMP SUHARTO, BUT TO BEGIN SERIOUSLY TO CONSIDER THE QUESTION OF HIS TENURE IN OFFICE AND THE MODALITY OF REMOVING HIM WHEN IT BECOMES DESIRABLE.

7. IT IS VIRTUALLY CERTAIN THAT PARLIAMENTARY CHAIRMAN ADAM MALIK WILL REPLACE THE SULTAN AS VICE-PRESIDENT.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 JAKART 03272 131008Z

IT IS VERY UNLIKELY, DESPITE THE PPP MUTTERINGS, THAT ANY ALTERNATE CANDIDATE WILL BE OFFERED IN THE MPR. THE NEW VICE-PRESIDENT SHOULD BE FIRMLY ENSCONCED IN OFFICE TO RECEIVE VICE-PRESIDENT MONDALE.
MASTERS

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